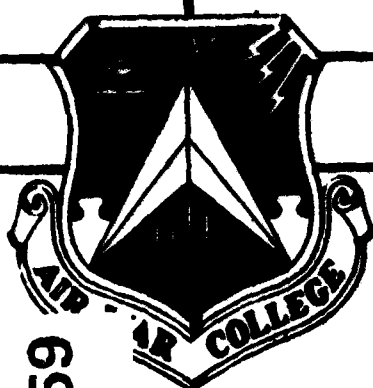


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AIR WAR COLLEGE

RESEARCH REPORT

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICER EVALUATION
SYSTEMS OF THE US ARMY AND THE US AIR FORCE

LT COL HAROLD W. SCHMID, JR.

1988

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AIR UNIVERSITY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICER EVALUATION
SYSTEMS OF THE US ARMY AND THE US AIR FORCE

by

Harold W. Schmid, Jr.
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army

A RESEARCH REPORT PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Colonel Ronald L. Morey

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: A comparative Analysis of the Officer Evaluation Systems of the US Army and the US Air Force

AUTHOR: Harold W. Schmid, Jr., Lieutenant Colonel, US Army

THESIS STATEMENT: Although the present Officer Evaluation Reporting System has served the US Air Force for the past decade as an efficient management tool, experience with the US Army's system has shown that the Air Force system may need some major revision.

This paper attempts to compare the current Air Force and Army appraisal systems and analyze the advantages and disadvantages to the Air Force in adopting major changes to the way it evaluates the performance of its officers. It begins with a review of various appraisal systems and the need for such a system in identifying our best leaders. Next the current appraisal system is reviewed in light of the role each member in the chain of command plays in the evaluation process. Certain mechanical and administrative processes are explored in an attempt to design a system which is objective, efficient, and easily administered. The paper ends with some recommended changes to the current Air Force system and a discussion of acceptability of those changes by Air Force officers.

5/20/71

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Harold W. Schmid has served for twenty years as an Armor officer and Army Aviator in a variety of assignments in the United States and overseas. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Personnel Management and, as a captain, was assigned an additional specialty of Officer Personnel Management. He has commanded units from company to battalion level for a total of five years and served as an assignment officer and Secretary of the General Staff at the Army Personnel Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

Both as a commander and a personnel manager, he has experienced the workings of evaluation systems and their effects on individual duty performance, unit morale, and officer retention. As an assignment officer, he became aware of the ill effects of an unfair and highly inflated evaluation system and the positive results achieved when the US Army instituted its current system in 1979. Lieutenant Colonel Schmid is a graduate of the Air War College, Class of 1988.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The identification, selection, and training of officers in our armed forces are critical functions in achieving an adequate national defense. We must ensure that the process used to educate and promote those officers is correct. It must be a system that has the confidence of those it affects directly and one which is able to show the taxpayer he's getting good value for his tax dollar.

Each component of our armed forces uses some type of performance appraisal system or fitness report which answers the questions of what was the officer's job, how well did he do his job, and should he be given additional responsibility? The means by which answers to these questions are derived is the focus of this research paper. The report will take a broad look at the officer efficiency reporting systems used by the US Air Force and US Army. Without exploring the intricate details of system administration and regulatory requirements, the discussion will center on an analysis of the Air Force system and how it could be improved using some innovative features of the Army's system.

It is not my intention to degrade the Air Force system by suggesting that adopting the Army system is the only answer to improvement. Neither system is perfect. The objective of any evaluation system is to identify, by the fairest means possible, those people who best reflect the

ability to achieve the goals and ideals of the organization. My intention is to show how this might better be accomplished in the Air Force by using my knowledge and experience with the Army system.

Organization

Chapter II will outline the need for appraisal systems as a personnel management tool. Although performance appraisals have been used primarily for promotions and school selection, they can also be of use in coaching officers on how to improve their performance. A standardized appraisal system provides senior leadership the means to consider each officer on the same basis. Hopefully, fewer charges of favoritism are made and the best qualified officers are selected for promotion. Several appraisal methods will be discussed as well as the problems associated with those methods. I will conclude with a discussion of how job performance can be enhanced by a methodical feedback system for the officer when he and his boss discuss duty performance in relation to organization goals and objectives.

Chapter III will examine the current Air Force system of appraisal and compare it with the current Army system. The role of the rated officer will be discussed to include his responsibilities toward organizational and personal goals. Next, the role played by the rater, additional rater, and indorser will be discussed and compared with the Army

system. The chapter will conclude with a look at the various OER forms in use and touch on a few limiting administrative factors.

Chapter IV concludes the report with a discussion of recommended changes to the Air Force appraisal system based on the major features of the Army system. The suggested changes include implementation of Management By Objectives (MBO), rate the rater, and evaluation of professional ethics.

CHAPTER II

PURPOSES AND TYPES OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

The primary purpose of performance appraisal systems is to provide management with a means to make personnel decisions. I will begin with discussing the various functions of an appraisal system and how it is used in officer personnel management. Various types of systems will be examined and related to the reporting systems used by the Army and Air Force. I will conclude with a review of the two primary reasons for having such a system and what I feel the Air Force hopes to measure with such a system.

Personnel appraisals have numerous uses in determining how well an officer performed his duties. They are capable of distinguishing the quality and effectiveness of an officer's performance in comparison with his contemporaries, determining his ability to perform certain tasks, and providing a measurement of his potential performance and capabilities. Some specific reasons for having personnel appraisal systems are:

- To give employees an idea of how they are doing.
- To identify promotable employees.
- For purposes of salary administration.
- To help train supervisors to know their workers better.
- To discover areas where additional training is needed.
- To identify employees for layoff in bad time.
- To identify employees who may be in "wrong" jobs.

- For selection during rehiring periods.
- To comply with union contract provisions.
- For use in grievance interviews.
- To aid in assuring employees of appropriate individual recognition and to assist in the development of competent personnel to carry out the organization's operation. (2:5)

Despite the many functions an appraisal system can perform, the two primary functions are (1) to provide a basis on which to make personnel management decisions, and (2) to provide a means to professionally develop subordinates. Some people such as Douglas McGregor have stated these two reasons are in conflict with each other. (16:187-188) On one hand, the supervisor is given the responsibility to counsel and professionally develop the ratee in an attempt to maximize his full potential. On the other hand, he is asked to serve in a judicial role toward the ratee at the end of the evaluation period. This conflict may very well contribute to the inflation factor in most appraisal systems. The supervisor is hesitant to admit he has been unsuccessful in most cases in drawing out the ratee's maximum performance.

With this in mind, what does the Air Force, or any of our military services, hope to gain from its performance appraisal system? Air Force Regulation 36-10 states the Air Force Personnel System uses Officer Effectiveness Reports (OERs) first for board actions concerning promotions, separations, augmentations and school selections, and second, in its development of assignments. (1:5)

The information produced by a series of reports prepared by different evaluators in a variety of duty situations becomes an indication of each officer's progressive development and a source to measure the officer's value when compared to contemporaries. This information, when incorporated into and considered with other parts of the officer's record, becomes a sound basis for personnel actions. (1:6)

This use of the appraisal system generally conforms to most modern conceptions both in civilian business organizations as well as the other military services. Use of the system as a professional development aid will be discussed later in this chapter. The Army and Air Force have different procedures concerning the use of the evaluation system as a professional development device.

In the following paragraphs, my intention is to introduce and briefly discuss various methods of performance appraisal in use today. My purpose is to show how the Air Force has incorporated parts of these methods into its current system.

Free-Written Statements

Using this method, the appraiser writes a narrative report about the ratee's performance. The ratee is, in a way, at the mercy of "lady luck" in that the writing ability of the appraiser plays an important part in the process. Each supervisor the ratee has will have different values and standards by which he judges the ratee's performance. There is no common basis for comparison among ratings, because different factors may be discussed by different supervisors.

(20:137) Although the Air Force and Army use the narrative style as part of their system, other methods are incorporated to give each system more depth. The narrative is used in the Army system by the rater strictly to describe only what the ratee did. The Air Force narrative also includes comments on potential.

Weighted Random Checklists

In this technique, a form is used which is made up of several descriptive phrases which have been assigned scoring weights when the form was designed. The weights are not known by the rater in an attempt to curb inflation. After the form is completed by the rater, it is evaluated by a specialist who assigns a score to each phrase checked by the rater. The weakest aspect of this method is the "proper" weighting of the items on the form. (20:137) This method has not been included as part of the Army or Air Force systems.

Graphic Scales

The most common method used is the graphic scale technique where various factors of performance are judged by the rater and recorded on a continuum from a low to high degree. Each of the scales usually has a brief statement or adjective describing the factor. (20:136) Graphic scales are currently used as a portion of both the Air Force and Army evaluation systems.

Critical Incidents

The critical incident method requires the rater to record specific examples of good or poor performance. Many raters dislike this approach in that it highlights the extreme performance and disregards the day-to-day activities which provide a more accurate measure of the ratee's effectiveness. (21:525) The integration of this method as a part of a larger process can provide the rater with the opportunity to draw particular attention to an outstanding accomplishment. Critical incidents are generally cited in the narrative portion of the Army and Air Force reports.

Work Sample Tests

Using this method, the ratee is given work-related tests on a periodic basis. The trouble with using this method for military officers is that a test to measure the performance under the "whole man" concept is virtually impossible to design and is therefore not used by either service. Additionally, the environment of a testing situation may not reflect actual capability, which can be affected by nervousness, concentration, and motivation to excel. The work sample test method is considered by many to be the least vulnerable to a legal challenge on the basis of equal opportunity.

(20:138)

Nomination

This method operates under the assumption that most people are satisfactory performers. The rater's job is to

single out exceptionally good and exceptionally poor performers. (20:138) Since the technique does not evaluate the larger number of satisfactory performers, it is inadequate when used alone. Incorporated with other techniques it can be a worthwhile discriminator. The military services have generally avoided the nomination method because of the "up-or-out" philosophy. If an officer were allowed to remain a captain his entire career, for instance, the nomination method would have greater usefulness to the military services.

Forced Distribution

Using this method, the rater is expected to rank subordinates by group instead of giving each individual a certain number of points. In most cases for instance, the top 10 percent are placed in the highest group, 20 percent in the next, 40 percent in the middle, 20 percent in the next-to-lowest, and 10 percent at the bottom. Although this dramatically reduces the inflation factor, it assumes that each separate group will have the same relative percentages of poor, average, and outstanding performers. This, of course, is not true, particularly in small groups of select individuals. This method was recommended by a study group at the Air University in 1987. (4:22) The reasoning behind their recommendation was based on a need for the Air Force to easily identify the top 5 or 10 percent of a particular grade for early promotion or 40 percent for school selection or even

the bottom rated officers for early separation should the need arise.

Objective Method

The objective method is the basis for the US Army's performance appraisal system. This method concentrates on performance planning, often involving the rater and subordinate in discussions to set performance goals or objectives for future accomplishment. Objectives are quantified and the appraisal of a subordinate's performance is based on an evaluation of results achieved against those objectives. A decision then can be made on whether the subordinate exceeded, met, or did not meet objectives. (20:132) This system is the normal appraisal method used in those organizations which use Management By Objectives (MBO) as a basis for doing business.

Designed to overcome some of the limitations of traditional systems, MBO, sometimes called results-oriented appraisal, has been widely adopted by many organizations. "MBO is based on concrete objectives, which are set jointly by superior and subordinate." (15:91) They set short-term performance goals together. At the end of a specified period (usually one year), they meet to evaluate how well these goals have been met, to discuss what can be done better, and to set new goals for the next rating period. The subordinate is therefore judged by the standards he helped determine.

Goal setting has two main advantages. First, goal setting is highly motivating. People have a need to know what they are expected to do and a clear understanding from collaboration directly with their bosses fills that need. Second, goal setting emphasizes the future (goals for the upcoming appraisal period) which can be changed or modified, rather than past accomplishments or failures which cannot be changed. (11:14) Furthermore, in contrast to a "closed system" in traditional appraisal methods, MBO gives subordinates an active role, increases their sense of control over their environment, and reduces their dependence on the boss. Finally, by emphasizing specific performance rather than character traits, MBO permits recognition of the innovative manager who gets results by unconventional means. It is also conducive to the senior military leader who gives only mission-type orders.

Hopefully this review of the need and uses of appraisal systems and the various means available to fulfill the need will aid in examining what changes, if any, might be warranted in the Air Force systems. Today's youth, upon whom the military will rely for its future leaders, are challenging the sources of authority and are seeking increased job satisfaction. Therefore, future appraisal systems must attempt to meet that need. They must be motivational in nature rather than "a manipulative tool or underlying threat

to insure conformance and compliance of an individual to the views of the superior." (7:2-4)

CHAPTER III

CURRENT APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

Now that we've looked at the various types of appraisal systems, in this chapter I will discuss the current Air Force and Army evaluation systems with a focus toward their usefulness in accomplishing their intended purposes. Much of the material presented here will be my own personal view as an officer who has lived with the current Army procedure since its inception in 1979. My experience as the Inspector General of an armored division, a battalion commander, and as an officer subject to the system, has convinced me that it comes closer than any other procedure to accomplishing its purpose. It is well accepted by the Army's officer corps as an equitable system which best relates individual duty performance to the unit's mission accomplishment.

I will explore the roles played by the rater, additional rater and indorser, and their responsibilities in both services. The chapter will conclude with a look at the terms used by each service to administer the system and briefly discuss some administrative considerations.

The Ratee

Whatever evaluation system is chosen by an organization, the fact that one human is assessing the work of another will always be a "weak link." The ideal system is designed to minimize the impact of human differences. To

accomplish this, the relationship between the rater and his subordinate must be one of open and candid communication. If the rater is to fulfill his leadership responsibilities, playing the role of mentor can lead to greater communication between subordinate and superior.

Although the Air Force encourages raters to counsel their subordinates, AFR 36-10 states: "Evaluation reports are designed for the personnel management of Air Force officers. Don't use them as counseling devices." (1:6) Since counseling needs to take place long before an efficiency report is rendered, some counseling should be incorporated into the evaluation system. Under the current Air Force system, there may be confusion in the ratee's mind as to what standard he is to achieve, what the full dimension of his duty is, and what the ratee thinks the rater expects of him as a subordinate. If the proper communication is occurring before and during the rating period, there shouldn't be any surprises or unexpected criticism on the efficiency report.

Under the Army's appraisal system, the ratee has several responsibilities he must meet throughout the rating period regarding the efficiency report itself. Although the Air Force ratee probably has similar responsibilities, the Air Force regulation is not specific in its guidance. The primary responsibility of the rated officer is to perform his duties to the best of his ability. By doing so, he will

enhance the ability of his unit to accomplish the mission. He must have a clear understanding of his duties and should evaluate his own performance throughout the period. If questions arise about additional responsibilities or his duties change somewhat, he should seek counsel from his superiors in the rating chain.

Additionally, within 30 days after the start of the rating period, he should talk with his rater about specific goals and objectives he is expected to reach and wants to achieve, as well as preparing an accurate description of his job.

As the rating period progresses, the ratee should reassess his objectives and revise or change them as the mission changes or certain objectives are reached.

At the end of the rating period, the rated officer should accurately describe how he achieved his objectives (or failed to do so) and what significant contributions he made. The ratee may accomplish this by expressing his own views and cannot be made to change those views, although the rating official may discuss them to ensure they are clear and accurate. How are these responsibilities of the ratee accomplished?

The Support Form

The purpose of the support form is:

- to increase advance planning and clarify the relationship of performance to mission.

- to encourage performance counseling and optimal use of individual talent.
- to provide information from the rated officer's point of view for use by the rating officials in making their evaluation. (3:4-2)

The support form is generated to encourage and take advantage of increased communications between the rated officer and his chain of command. After the form has been completed and the rated officer has listed his major contributions, the form is forwarded to the rater prior to the efficiency report being started. The form accompanies the report from the rater to the additional rater, or intermediate rater, and then on to the indorser or senior rater. After the senior rater has completed his portion of the efficiency report, the support form is returned to the ratee. (See example support form on page 42.)

The support form is used to accomplish the "objectives" approach to performance appraisal. It facilitates performance counseling through the required discussions between rater and ratee at the beginning, middle, and end of the rating period.

I feel the Air Force evaluation reporting system should incorporate some form of performance counseling and officer feedback. Currently, there is little feedback concerning duty performance between raters and their subordinates. In a study conducted by Major Glen N. Pontiff, USAF, in April 1987, entitled "OER Perceptions of Field and Company

Grade Line Officers," 90 percent of the 981 respondents to a survey thought that required counseling should be part of the Air Force OER policy. (19:18) The current system does not require the ratee to provide any formal input to his appraisal, although informal input is welcomed and encouraged. Providing him the means to clearly understand objectives and standards, coupled with a way to find out when things are wrong, can be as important as the efficiency report itself.

The Discrimination Objective

An objective of any appraisal system is to identify top performers and those not as deserving of promotion. The Air Force OER is a primary document (although but one of several inputs) used to identify those officers for promotion below the zone of consideration. Only a certain percentage can be selected because of grade structure and fiscal restraints. During an interview on 15 March 1988, Air Force Chief of Staff, General Larry D. Welch discussed how the OER currently does not perform this vital function very well due to the inflation of ratings. As early as one and one-half years after the current system was initiated, the percentage of top block ratings among line officers had risen to 94 percent. (19:12)

Although the present system meets the requirement of identifying officers with specific background and experience, the inflation level hinders the selection of the best qualified and most deserving officers for any specific

assignment. Again, the objective of providing a discriminator is not well fulfilled.

The Rater

The rater is the person in the rating chain who is most familiar with the ratee's daily performance. Under the Army system, he is always the ratee's immediate supervisor and one who most directly influences the ratee's duty performance.

No matter what color uniform the rater wears, he is faced with the same problems in writing appraisals as his civilian counterpart in private industry. A study of over 300 US corporations revealed, "Managers resent the time it takes to do performance appraisals well; they are known to ignore the procedure when they can or to fudge their comments to avoid the embarrassment inherent in criticizing subordinates." (19:47) I would agree that it is human nature to avoid confrontation on such matters as a subordinate's poor duty performance. It is uncomfortable and sometimes creates disruptive stress within an organization. However, if the proper communication has been established between rater and ratee, and standards and tasks are identified and agreed upon, the impact of criticism is minimized. By regulation, a superior cannot "ignore" performance appraisals of subordinates in the military nor should he "resent" the time necessary to do them correctly. Taking the time to evaluate duty performance of subordinates is one of our primary

responsibilities and an absolute necessity if we are to maintain a quality force. We certainly expect our superiors to spend the necessary time to evaluate our duties and should give nothing less to our subordinates. If for no other reason, taking the time is a matter of professional integrity which we cannot compromise.

Before discussing the specific responsibilities of the rater, let's discuss some of the subjective errors which may arise from a poor rater-ratee relationship.

- "insufficient evidence" is always a problem when the rater is trying to evaluate performance of someone in a job where actual results are difficult to measure. In this case, the ratee's ability to get along with the rater may be more important than performance, particularly if the rater only gets a limited view of that performance. (21:523)

- "Similar-to-me" errors occur because people differ in their standards of judgment. Raters tend to rate subordinates similar to themselves in background, values, and behavior higher than they rate those dissimilar to themselves. For instance, a rater who is accustomed to making quick decisions may get aggravated with the methodical and deliberate subordinate. (21:524)

- "Excessive leniency or strictness." Everyone has his own philosophy for rating someone else. Some consistently rate high, others always low, and still others stick to the middle. Ratings tend to be higher when raters know that subordinates see their ratings. Many raters feel that low ratings will antagonize subordinates and cause additional problems in the unit. Additionally, some raters feel that low ratings are a direct reflection on their own leadership and managerial abilities. If a subordinate is rated as a poor performer, the rater's boss may want to know why something was not done to rectify the problem before the end of the rating period. Low ratings may be perceived as reflecting poorly on the unit. (21:523)

- "The halo effect" is created when a few specific good aspects of a subordinate's job performance are allowed to color the entire report. A similar situation occurs with the "first impression" errors created by the first impression (good or bad) made by the ratee toward the rater. (32:525)

- "Recency errors" are most difficult to control. Raters tend to give more weight to recent events than to those occurring toward the beginning of the report period. (21:522)

Aside from problems arising between the rater and ratee, there is also a problem created when the rater's superior is involved in the appraisal process. The reviewer of appraisal reports is many times the rater's boss. Because of this, the rater finds himself dealing with two diverse interests. "The difficulty in practical terms is this: while the rater's task is to evaluate the ratee, his own judgements are also being evaluated for their soundness, completeness, and the information they provide the second-level reviewer about operations." (17:745) The rater, in many cases, reaches a compromise that generally places primacy with his boss, the reviewer. Consequently, the subordinate's evaluation may be distorted and the rating inflated.

After this review of the many pitfalls for the rater, we can conclude that the normal tendency is to rate higher than actual performance dictates. The rater has to work with his subordinates on a daily basis and high ratings lead to a friendlier atmosphere. Some raters may feel the better the ratee's evaluation, the better the rater looks to his boss,

the reviewer. Human nature being what it is, we are hesitant to admit to our superiors that, even in a single instance, we were unable through our leadership to motivate a poor performer. If we are not hesitant to admit failure, are we taking steps to eliminate the poor performer from the organization? The end result is a system which is so inflated that the rater is hard pressed to find enough superlatives to keep his subordinates competitive. Moreover, the few truly outstanding performers tend to get lost in the crowd of perceived "water walkers."

The Air Force does provide specific guidance concerning raters as to grade, time in position, relationship to ratee, etc., but it does not list specific responsibilities of the rater as it pertains to evaluation reports. The Army does designate responsibilities the rater must fulfill during the rating period:

- Discuss the scope of the rated officer's duties with him to include the ratee's duty description and the performance objectives to be obtained within 30 days after the beginning of the rating period.
- Counsel the rated officer throughout the rated period.
- Advise the rated officer as to changes in his duty description and performance objectives when needed.
- Assess the performance of the rated officer using personal contact, records and reports, and the information provided by the ratee on the OER support form.
- Provide objective and comprehensive evaluation of the rated officer's potential and performance on the OER form.

- Complete the rater's portion of the support form and forward it, with the report, to the intermediate or senior rater. (3:4-6)

The Army rater provides a key ingredient to an effective appraisal system. His communication and counseling skills are crucial to achieving an accurate assessment of a subordinate's performance and potential. Even though the Army rater is subject to the same pitfalls the Air Force rater faces, he is in a better position to control inflation because of the performance counseling conducted and the lesser amount of influence he has toward the overall "score" of the efficiency report. These aspects will be further discussed later in chapter 4.

The Additional or Intermediate Rater

The function performed by the additional rater in the Air Force or the intermediate rater in the Army is similar. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to this person as the "additional rater." The additional rater in the Air Force is the rater's rater and is so designated on a published rating scheme. Under the Army system, he does not have to be the rater's rater, but must be in the ratee's chain of command. For instance, the company and battalion executive officers are responsible for equipment maintenance within a battalion (one is a lieutenant and one a major). The company executive officer is rated by the company commander and senior rated by the battalion commander. The intermediate rater would be the battalion executive officer. The rater's rater (company

commander) is the battalion commander. Additional raters are not required under the Army system. They are designated by the battalion commander on the rating scheme, prior to the rating period. If designated as an additional or intermediate rater, comment on the report form is mandatory in narrative format. Additionally, he is required to review the OER support form and provide any comments he feels necessary to the final review authority (senior rater). The duties and responsibilities of the additional rater are the same as the rater's. He suffers under the same possibilities for human error as discussed for the rater such as "halo effect" and "critical incident." In both services, the additional rater should be someone who is in a position to observe the day-to-day performance of the rated officer.

One of the primary functions the additional rater serves is to "keep the rater honest." By this I mean that this middle link in the appraisal chain acts as a safety check to keep any dramatic prejudice at a minimum. If there is a personality conflict between the ratee and the rater, the additional rater can spot this conflict if it enters the rater's evaluation. Since both the rater and additional rater have first-hand knowledge of the ratee's duty performance, diverse opinions can be resolved between them prior to the report being forwarded to the final review authority for comment. The Air Force additional rater has the option to "concur" or "non-concur" with the rater's comments without having to

comment in narrative form. In December 1985, the Air Force Chief of Staff directed that the additional rater no longer had the option to defer comment to a higher authority. Among other advantages, the decision eased the administrative workload of more senior officers.

The Indorser or Senior Rater

As with the rater and additional rater, the indorser is subject to the potential problems that can be encountered when judging human performance. Unfortunately, he has fewer facts on which to base his evaluation because his position is such that he has infrequent contact with the ratee. He is forced to rely on what the previous two raters have said about the ratee and generally bases his evaluation on how the individual's work has contributed to the unit's effectiveness. Because of his seniority and experience, the indorser is in a good position to comment on the ratee's potential for advancement. He is in a position to rate performance from a broad organizational perspective and act as a link between day-to-day observations and the longer term evaluation of the officer's potential by selection boards.

Although the indorser performs a similar function in both the Army and Air Force, there are some significant differences. The two principal differences I will discuss are the level of indorsement and evaluation inflation.

Since the OER is used to distinguish the very best officers from others (among other uses), inflation of the

system degrades the ability to discriminate. Aside from the level of assignment and writing ability, the level of indorsement helps in the discrimination process. (See pages 40 and 41 for indorser grade requirements.) Over the years, the Air Force level of indorsement issue has become somewhat of a contest to see who can get the highest ranking indorsement; the logic being, the higher the rank of the indorser, the higher the quality of duty performance. If selection boards rely on this logic, the entire evaluation process will become a game of positioning and politics rather than a measurement of an individual's ability to accomplish the mission.

One reason the problem exists is because the indorser designated on the rating scheme has the ability to defer to a higher authority for comment. As early as 1979, 80 percent of Military Airlift Command majors being considered for lieutenant colonel had at least one general officer indorsement on their last OER. (19:21)

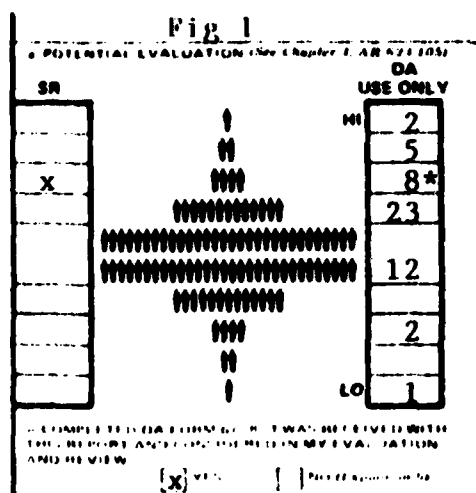
As a result of this deferral to a higher indorser, the higher ranking officers make statements about performance they may not have observed. Furthermore, they are burdened with additional work on top of a full schedule and their credibility and impact as an indorser are greatly reduced. In 1987, a working group of Air Force officers, under the sponsorship of Air Force Chief of Staff General Larry D. Welch, proposed that the rating chain maintain strict

compliance with chain of command reporting officials determined by assignment of raters via the AF Form 2095. (4:13)

The indorser under the Army evaluation system is known as the senior rater. Army Regulation 635-105 enumerates several responsibilities for the senior rater of which the primary one is to assess the ability of the rated officer. He is further challenged by having to place the ratee's performance in perspective by considering the ratee's experience, the relative risk associated with the job performance, the difficulty of the unit's mission, adequacy of resources, and the overall efficiency of the organization. (3:3-6) He uses the information on the support form as well as comments on the OER by the rater to make his assessment of the ratee's potential and performance. He does not have the option to defer to a higher authority for comment. His role is set by the published rating scheme.

Since the current Army system was begun in 1979, the senior rater's potential assessment has become one of the most important factors in controlling inflation. Using a sample population of 100 officers of the same grade, he places the ratee in a position relative to his contemporaries. While there are no requirements to spread ratings across all of the "boxes" (see illustration below), logic dictates that by placing all officers in the top box, the senior rater is distorting the system and is not providing valid or credible information to selection boards. To prevent the inherent

inflation in any rating scale system, the Army developed safeguards. To anyone examining a senior rater's appraisal,



there can be no significant meaning attached to the rating until it is compared to the senior rater's normal rating tendency. Therefore, when an OER arrives at the Army Personnel Center, the senior rater's rating profile is attached to the report. The rating profile contains a history of how

that particular senior rater appraised all officers of the same grade up to that time. This rating history gives selection boards a comparison of the senior rater's rating tendency with how he rated a particular officer. For example, a senior rater who places an officer in the third block has not necessarily given a poor report if his history shows that most of his ratings have been in the fourth and fifth blocks.

To further guard against inflation, the Army enters the Senior rater's reporting history in the senior rater's official personnel file. By doing so, the Army emphasizes the senior rater's appraisal responsibilities. Each year, the Senior Rater's Profile Report (DA Form 67-8-2) is published on all officers who acted as a senior rater for at least five different officers. One copy goes to the officer and another into his personnel file. (See example on page

43.) This is done to highlight the fact that evaluating subordinates is one of the highest responsibilities of senior officers because of its impact on the selection of future leaders. The extent to which a senior rater fulfills his responsibility is an indication of his performance. Should a senior rater find that he has placed too many officers in the upper portion of the scale, he can request through an informal letter that his profile be restarted. Additionally, his profile is automatically restarted when he has rated 100 different officers of the same grade. A good time to do this is when the senior rater begins a new duty or is transferred to a different organization. However, restarting the profile can be accomplished at any time without hurting the ratee. Each report will reflect the rating tendency under a particular profile. If a senior rater persists in continuing an inflated profile, he loses credibility with selection boards, hinders the officers he rates, and hurts his own record. Even though an officer restarts his profile, his old profile remains a part of his permanent record. Once the senior rater has rated five different officers of the same grade, a new profile is entered into his records.

The Form

Whatever format the evaluation takes on a piece of paper, it should be capable of being efficiently administered. It should not take an inordinate amount of time to complete. Additionally, the form provides the necessary standardization

to prevent unfair advantage. The form should contain sufficient administrative data to accurately identify the ratee, his specialty and date of rank, the time period covered for the report and proper space for authentication for rating officials. Many have argued that too much time is spent on getting the format for efficiency reports perfect, such as no handwritten reports and reports free of typing errors without pen and ink corrections. Handwritten reports can hurt or help a ratee. Certain handwritten gimmicks and handwriting style can be an advantage. Poor handwriting that appears sloppy or difficult to read is usually a disadvantage to the ratee. The resulting lack of standardization is obviously inadequate when dealing with the professional futures of officers. Others argue that "the prettier the package, the better the product." A perfectly typed report which is clean and easily read has several benefits. It reflects well on the author, the unit, and gives selection boards the impression that the rated officer was worth the time to "get it right." My argument would be that in our world of word processing equipment today, producing virtually perfect reports is more easily accomplished.

The form should also contain a portion which allows comment on professional competence and professional ethics. I feel the Air Force should reduce the amount of physical space used to evaluate professional competence and use the gained space to add a section devoted to evaluating

professional ethics (see pages 36 and 38). If the form lists a number of factors and asks the rater to evaluate them using a scale or yes/no method, the general tendency is to give everyone the highest rating since each call for a subjective evaluation and no one wants to place his subordinates at a disadvantage when he feels other raters will "max" their officers. Even so, the mere listing of these "professional ethics" factors sends a signal to the officer corps as to what traits are considered important in the eyes of senior leadership. Additionally, listing the factors allows the rater a means to be critical about a particular officer who is not competent in various aspects of his job. Again, this is another way to provide a discriminator.

The Department of Defense has been criticized in the past for not having a written code of ethics for its officers such as lawyers and doctors. Professional ethics such as loyalty, integrity, discipline and moral courage are characteristics the services demand in its officer corps. Placing them as an evaluation item on the OER sends another signal to the ratee as to what is important.

Next, the form should provide space for each rater to verbally comment on the ratee in narrative form. The space should be sufficient to allow the writer to describe duty performance for the entire rating period, yet the requirement to "fill up the block" should be discouraged. Comments on potential are important and should be incorporated in the

narrative. Both Army and Air Force forms fulfill this requirement quite well.

Finally, there should be a portion devoted to the highest rater's evaluation compared to other officers of similar grade and qualifications. It should answer the question, "How does this officer's duty performance compare with his contemporaries performance?" The Air Force form uses too much space for this purpose. I recommend reducing the space and using what is gained for additional narrative comments.

We have looked at several aspects of how the Army and Air Force officer evaluation reporting systems compare and differ. Each of the services have different missions and different requirements which are unique unto themselves and therefore, we cannot expect that their evaluation procedures should be the same. We should expect that the system accomplish what it was designed for and provide a means whereby the most qualified officers are chosen to become the organization's senior leaders.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout Chapter III, I attempted to highlight the flaws in the Air Force evaluation system and the advantages of the Army system. The Army system is certainly not perfect as I mentioned earlier. In surveys conducted over the past several years, the Army's system is seen as being widely accepted by its officers as a fair and equitable means to measure the worth of individual officers. The Army's challenge in the future is to constantly review the process to ensure it is providing the means to select the very best officers for greater and greater responsibility.

Appraisal By Objectives

I recommend the Air Force adopt some form of the Army's system of appraisal by objectives. Most officers want to do a good job and are concerned about their OER (not to be confused with careerism). A system which fosters increased communications between rater and ratee would lead to the rater becoming less hesitant to criticize and mentor his subordinates. Setting specific goals makes the ratee more aware of the unit's mission, the part he plays, and the standards his boss expects him to maintain. The Army's OER support form would be a good starting point.

Rate-the-Rater

The Air Force should adopt some form of rate-the-rater system. This procedure would allow selection boards to compare the rating of one officer with the rating history of the rater up to that particular report. Second, the rating history would help prevent inflation in two ways: (1) the rater would know that if he contributed to inflation by "top-blocking" everyone, his credibility and ability to promote his best officers would be severely questioned; (2) the fact that the rater's rating history would be part of his own personnel file would show his superiors and his promotion board how seriously he takes his responsibility of officer evaluation. In short, we would be holding people responsible for their actions.

Professional Ethics

As an addition to their present system, the Air Force should add an opportunity for one of the raters to evaluate the professional ethics of the officer. The Army does this by adding a small section on the front of their report form which includes eight ethical traits of importance to the Army. Sufficient space is provided on the form to allow for short comments concerning how the officer upheld these traits during his daily conduct of duty (see bottom of page 38). The attributes of integrity, loyalty, moral courage, selflessness, and discipline are absolutely essential when evaluating the "whole man."

The Closed System

Although I have not discussed the issue of secrecy earlier, I feel compelled to do so here in order to leave the reader with a final impression of my strongest feeling. The most glaring difference between the Army and Air Force appraisal systems is the issue of secrecy. The Air Force Form 706 should be eliminated. Air Force Form 706 is prepared for Air Force colonels to comment on their potential to assume the responsibilities of general officer. The rated officer is not aware of the contents of the report and is not afforded an opportunity to comment. Closed reports attack the integrity of the system and the writer of the report. On one hand, a closed system allows the rater to encourage and give praise to an officer (AF Form 707) while at the same time criticizing his lack of potential for further advancement. Secret reports, no matter what their purpose, do not belong in an organization that values moral courage and integrity. If an officer at the rank of colonel does not have the potential for advancement, the system should be willing to tell him in an open manner. If leaders are to fulfill their responsibility, they should be willing to openly discuss and report their feelings to the rated officer.

As stated earlier, most officers truly desire to know what is expected of them and how well they are fulfilling those expectations. When an appraisal system can assist

an organization in focusing its objectives and creating a better relationship between superiors and subordinates, it should be given careful consideration for adoption.

Summary

This paper has identified the need for the officer evaluation reporting systems of both services to evaluate the officer's duty performance, determine his promotion potential, and provide a record of performance over the span of an entire career.

Although no system is perfect, I feel that careful examination of both systems will reveal that the Army's system contains several features of checks and balances which are better designed to reduce inflation, provide feedback to the rated officer, and evaluate how leaders are fulfilling their responsibility toward officer development.

Several studies over the past two years have concluded that the Air Force system is in need of revision particularly in the areas of reducing inflation and providing feedback to the rated officer. Adoption by the Air Force of concepts similar to the Army's use of a "support form," "goal setting," and senior rater profile should accomplish the needed revision.

Fig 2

I. RATEE IDENTIFICATION DATA (Read AFR 36-10 carefully before filling in any item)							
1. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)		2. SSAN (Include Suffix)		3. GRADE		4. DAFC	
5. ORGANIZATION, COMMAND, LOCATION						6. PAS CODE	
7. PERIOD OF REPORT			8. NO. DAYS OF SUPERVISION		9. REASON FOR REPORT		
FROM:			THRU:				
II. JOB DESCRIPTION 1. DUTY TITLE: 2. KEY DUTIES, TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:							
III. PERFORMANCE FACTORS							
Specific example of performance required		NOT OBSERVED	FAR/BELOW STANDARD	BELOW STANDARD	MEETS STANDARD	ABOVE STANDARD	WELL/ABOVE STANDARD
1. JOB KNOWLEDGE (Depth, currency, breadth)		0					
2. JUDGMENT AND DECISIONS (Consistent, accurate, effective)		0					
3. PLAN AND ORGANIZE WORK (Timely, creative)		0					
4. MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES (Manpower and material)		0					
5. LEADERSHIP (Initiative, accept responsibility)		0					
6. ADAPTABILITY TO STRESS (Stable, flexible, dependable)		0					
7. ORAL COMMUNICATION (Clear, concise, confident)		0					
8. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION (Clear, concise, organized)		0					
9. PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES (Attitude, dress, cooperation, bearing)		0					
10. HUMAN RELATIONS (Equal opportunity participation, sensitivity)							

IV. ASSIGNMENT RECOMMENDATION:

1. STRONGEST QUALIFICATION:

2. SUGGESTED JOB (Include AFSC):

3. ORGANIZATION LEVEL:

4. TIMING:

V. EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL:

Compare the ratee's capability to assume increased responsibility with that of other officers whom you know in the same grade. Indicate your rating by placing an "X" in the designated portion of the most appropriate block.

RATER	ADDN	INDORS-	RATER	ADDN	INDORS-	RATER	ADDN	INDORS-	RATER	ADDN	INDORS-
RATER	RATER	ER	RATER	RATER	ER	RATER	RATER	ER	RATER	RATER	ER
Lowest ←									Highest ↑		

VI. RATER COMMENTS

NAME, GRADE, BR OF SVC, ORGN, COMD, LOCATION	DUTY TITLE		DATE
	SSAN	SIGNATURE	

VII. ADDITIONAL RATER COMMENTS

☐ CONCUR

☐ NONCONCUR

NAME, GRADE, BR OF SVC, ORGN, COMD, LOCATION	DUTY TITLE		DATE
	SSAN	SIGNATURE	

VIII. INDORSER COMMENTS

☐ CONCUR

☐ NONCONCUR

NAME, GRADE, BR OF SVC, ORGN, COMD, LOCATION	DUTY TITLE		DATE
	SSAN	SIGNATURE	

Fig 3

SEE PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT
ON DA FORM 67-8For use of this form, see AM 639-106, paragraph
agency is US Army Military Personnel Center

PART I - ADMINISTRATIVE DATA											
1. LAST NAME FIRST NAME MIDDLE INITIAL				2. SSN		3. GRADE		4. DATE IN RANK Year Month Day		5. MR MS MA MRS	
6. UNIT ORGANIZATION STATION, ZIP CODE OR APO, MAJOR COMMAND								7. RELATION FOR SUBMISSION		8. SPECIALTY	
9. PERIOD COVERED FROM Year Month Day THRU Year Month Day				10. NO. OF MONTHS		11. MILPO CODE		12. RATED OFFICER COPY (Check one and date) <input type="checkbox"/> 1. GIVEN TO OFFICER <input type="checkbox"/> 2. FORWARDED TO OFFICER			
13. EXPLANATION OF NONRATED PERIODS											
PART II - AUTHENTICATION (Rated officer signature verifies PART I data and RATING OFFICIALS ONLY)											
14. NAME OF RATER (Last, First, MI)				15. SSN		16. SIGNATURE				17. DATE	
18. GRADE BRANCH ORGANIZATION, DUTY ASSIGNMENT											
19. NAME OF INTERMEDIATE RATER (Last, First, MI)				20. SSN		21. SIGNATURE				22. DATE	
23. GRADE BRANCH ORGANIZATION, DUTY ASSIGNMENT											
24. NAME OF SENIOR RATER (Last, First, MI)				25. SSN		26. SIGNATURE				27. DATE	
28. GRADE BRANCH ORGANIZATION, DUTY ASSIGNMENT											
29. SIGNATURE OF RATED OFFICER				30. DATE		31. DATE LISTED ON DA FORM 21		32. RATED OFFICER SPO INITIALS		33. SPO INITIALS	
PART III - DUTY DESCRIPTION (Rater)											
34. PRINCIPAL DUTY TITLE								35. SSN/KEY			
36. REFER TO PART III, DA FORM 67-8											
PART IV - PERFORMANCE EVALUATION - PROFESSIONALISM (Rater)											
37. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE (In Items 1 through 14 below, indicate the degree of agreement with the following statements as being descriptive of the rated officer. Any comments will be reflected in 5 below.)								HIGH DEGREE		LOW DEGREE	
								1		2	
								3		4	
								5			
1. Possesses capacity to acquire knowledge/grasp concepts				2. Displays sound judgment							
3. Demonstrates appropriate knowledge and expertise in assigned tasks				3. Seeks self-improvement							
4. Maintains appropriate level of physical fitness				10. Is adaptable to changing situations							
5. Motivates, challenges and develops subordinates				11. Sets and enforces high standards							
6. Performs under physical and mental stress				12. Promotes military bearing and appearance							
7. Encourages candor and frankness in subordinates				13. Supports EO/ESD							
8. Clear and concise in written communication				14. Clear and concise in oral communication							
38. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS (Comment in any area where the rated officer is particularly outstanding or needs improvement)											
1. DEDICATION 2. RESPONSIBILITY 3. LOYALTY 4. DISCIPLINE 5. INTEGRITY 6. MORAL COURAGE 7. SELF-CONTROL 8. MODERATION											

DA FORM 67-8

REPLACES DA FORM 67-8, 1 JAN 73, WHICH IS OBSOLETE, 1 NOV 78

US ARMY OFFICER EVALUATION SYSTEM

PERIOD CONTINUED

PART V - PERFORMANCE AND POTENTIAL EVALUATION

1. NAME OF THE RATER

2. DATE OF EVALUATION (USE OF THE RATER'S ORGANIZATION'S METHOD)

YES ☐ NO ☐

3. PERFORMANCE DURING THE RATING PERIOD: REFER TO PART III, DA FORM 67-R AND PART III A, B, AND C, DA FORM 67-R-1

☐

ALWAYS EXCEEDED REQUIREMENTS

☐

USUALLY EXCEEDED REQUIREMENTS

☐

MEET REQUIREMENTS

☐

OFTEN FAILED REQUIREMENTS

☐

USUALLY FAILED REQUIREMENTS

4. COMMENT ON RATER AND/OR OF THE PERFORMANCE: REFER TO PART III, DA FORM 67-R AND PART III A, B, AND C, DA FORM 67-R-1. DO NOT USE FOR COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL

5. THIS OFFICER'S POTENTIAL FOR PROMOTION TO THE NEXT HIGHER GRADE IS:

☐

PROMOTE AHEAD OF CONTEMPORARIES

☐

PROMOTE WITH CONTEMPORARIES

☐

DO NOT PROMOTE

☐

OTHER (Explain below)

6. COMMENT ON POTENTIAL

PART VI - INTERMEDIATE RATER

7. COMMENTS

PART VII - SENIOR RATER

8. POTENTIAL EVALUATION (See Chapter I, AR 600-10)

SR	DA USE ONLY
	HI
	LO

9. ALL PAGES OF DA FORM 67-R-1 WAS RECEIVED WITH THE REPORT AND CONSIDERED IN MY EVALUATION AND REVIEW

YES ☐

NO (Explain in 5)

10. COMMENTS

Fig 4

RULES FOR ESTABLISHING RATING CHAINS				
<p>COMMANDERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ESTABLISHING RATING CHAINS FOR THEIR ORGANIZATIONS.</p> <p>COMMANDERS WILL NORMALLY RATE COMMANDERS.</p>				
Requirements for Rating Officials				
Rating Officials	Requirements			
RATER	<p>WILL NORMALLY BE THE IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR OF THE RATED OFFICER.</p> <p>WILL BE SENIOR TO THE RATED OFFICER.</p>			
INTERMEDIATE RATER	<p>WILL NORMALLY BE INCLUDED WHEN THERE IS A LEVEL OF SUPERVISION BETWEEN THE RATER AND SENIOR RATER.</p> <p>IF INCLUDED, WILL BE SENIOR TO THE RATED OFFICER.</p>			
SENIOR RATER				
When the Grade of the Rated Officer is:	The Minimum Grade of the Senior Rater is:			
	Military Senior Rater	Or Civilian Performing Senior Rater Function **		
		GENERAL SCHEDULE	NONAPPROPRIATED FUND	SENIOR EXEC PVE (CES)
Warrant Officer Second Lieutenant First Lieutenant	04 MAJ/CPT(P)*	GS-14	UA-14	A member of the SES may be a senior rater for all grades of rated officers provided he/she is in the rated officer's chain of command and is at least one level above the immediate supervisor of the rated officer.
Captain	05 LTC/MAJ(P)*	GS-14	UA-14	
Major	06 COL/LTC(P)*	GS-15	UA-15	
Lieutenant Colonel	06 COL/LTC(P)*	GS-16	UA-16	
Colonel	07 BG/COL(P)*	GS-17	UA-17	
Brigadier General Major General	Senior to the Senior and Intermediate Rater.			

- * in a position authorized the rating process (see para 3.1)
- ** Supplementary review required (see para 3.1)

Fig 5

WHO SERVES AS INDORSER OF AF FORM 707			
R U L E	A	B	C
	If ratee is a	and is	then the report is indorsed by one of the following who must be in the rating chain (these are minimum grade requirements) (see note 1)
1	colonel	assigned within Department of the Air Force (DAF)	USAF general officer or DAF civilian equivalent.
2		not assigned within DAF	a general officer, flag officer, or civilian equivalent (see note 2)
3		ANG not on FAD	the Adjutant General, federally recognized ANG or active duty general officer or State Governor (see note 3)
4	lieutenant colonel thru lieutenant	assigned within DAF	USAF colonel, or DAF civilian in grade GS-15 or above (see note 4)
5		not assigned within DAF	a colonel, colonel-equivalent, or civilian in grade GS-15 or above (see notes 2 and 4)
6		ANG not on FAD	the Adjutant General, federally recognized ANG or active duty colonel or State Governor (see notes 3 and 4)

NOTES: 1. Reports for "Stat Tour" officers are indorsed within the MAJCOM or OER Management point to which the ratee is assigned.
 2. If the indorser is not an Air Force officer or DAF civilian, the report is provided to the Air Force advisor for comment before acceptance by

the CBPO (paragraph 3-1g)

3. The State Governor is the indorser for the State Adjutant General only.

4. No lieutenant colonel is authorized to act as indorser.

Fig 6

OFFICER EVALUATION REPORT SUPPORT FORM			
For use of this form, see AR 623 105; proponent agency is US Army Military Personnel Center.			
Read Privacy Act Statement and Instructions on Reverse before Completing this form.			
PART I - RATED OFFICER IDENTIFICATION			
NAME OF RATED OFFICER (Last, First, MI)	GRADE	PRINCIPAL DUTY TITLE	ORGANIZATION
PART II - RATING CHAIN - YOUR RATING CHAIN FOR THE EVALUATION PERIOD IS:			
RATER	NAME	GRADE	POSITION
INTERMEDIATE RATER	NAME	GRADE	POSITION
SENIOR RATER	NAME	GRADE	POSITION
RATED OFFICER'S SPECIALTIES/MOS		DUTY SSI/MOS	
PART III - RATED OFFICER (Complete a, b and c below for this rating period)			
a. STATE YOUR SIGNIFICANT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES			
b. INDICATE YOUR MAJOR PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES			
c. LIST YOUR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS			
(Signature and Date)			

Fig. 7

SINIOR NATHR PROFILE REPORT

OFFICER EVALUATION REPORTING SYSTEM

For use of this form, see AN 623 105. proponent agency is US Army Military Personnel Center

PART I ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

a NAME (Last, First MI)	b SSN	c GRADE	d DATE OF REPORT
FOX, LARRY R.	417-11-1666	COL	September 1971

PART II SENIOR RATE R PROFILE

MG	BG	COL	LTC	MAJ	CPT	PLT LTJ	CW3 CW4	CW01 CW2	TOTAL RATINGS	HIGHEST
			2	2	1				5	I
			3	6	3				12	II
			4	5	9				18	III
			6	9	12				27	IV
			4	5	10				17	V
			1	1	2				4	VI
			1	1	1				3	VII
			0	0	0				0	VIII
			0	0	0				0	IX
									95	LOWEST
			10	24	33				TOTAL OFFICERS 76	

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